

December 2008 Newsletter

Native Plant Society of Texas - South Texas Chapter



Dec. 4th – Monthly Meeting – Guest Speaker – Dr. Alice Hempel

Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Garden Senior Center, 5325 Greely Drive, Corpus Christi.

Dr. Alice Hempel will be giving a talk on South Texas Ambrosia (*Ambrosia cheiranthifolia* Gray). This endangered species is a perennial, clonal, ragweed in short grass prairie habitats that have largely been plowed and/or invaded with exotic invasive grasses. It is currently known only from a handful of locations in Nueces, Kleberg and Cameron County. She will discuss a cooperative educational project between Nueces County, TPWD, USF&W, USGS, USDA, the San Antonio Botanical Garden, local schools and universities which resulted in 200 South Texas Ambrosia plants being transplanted by high school and college students in 2006 into an artificial Burrowing Owl habitat in the Nueces County park in Robstown, TX.

**No January Meeting
Enjoy the holidays!!!**

Vote at December Meeting on Fate of Chapter - Shelly Maher

Carolyn Chancellor and I were talking about the fate of the South Texas Chapter after the cancellation of the last meeting. Membership and attendance began decreasing last spring and has been dismal this fall. Out of respect for our volunteer speakers, we can not continue to ask them to come speak to 3-5 people. Also, Ann has been asking someone to replace her as president for over a year with no success. Unless someone wishes to take over as president and try to re-vitalize the chapter, **we will motion for a vote on closing the South Texas Chapter at the December meeting.** If someone is interested in taking on this project, Carolyn and I will continue to help with finding speakers and I will continue to write the newsletter. Most of our current bank balance is allocated to the Native Garden at the Botanical Gardens and we will honor that commitment. We will determine how the rest of the funds should be dealt with by consulting the State NPSOT office before the Dec. meeting. Please consider this matter and be prepared to vote at the meeting.

Renewed Memberships

Wayne McAlister of Victoria
Shelly Maher of Bishop

Do You Know Your Natives???" Contributed by: USDA-NRCS Kika de la Garza Plant Materials Center



Clammyweed (*Polanisia* spp.) is an annual member of the Capparidaceae family (Lehman, O'Brien, and White, 2005). There are five species native to North America with two of these native to South Texas, *Polanisia dodecandra* and *Polanisia erosa* (Correll and Johnston, 1996). Both are further divided into subspecies. They are found in sandy soils of open woods and fields or on deep sands (Lehman, O'Brien, and White, 2005). *Polanisia dodecandra* grows to 60 cm high and has pink to purple blooms from April to October. *Polanisia erosa* grows to 50 cm high and has yellow flowers blooming from April to November (Lehman, O'Brien, and White, 2005). The name clammyweed refers to the sticky residue left on hands after the plant is handled (Ajilvsgi, 1984). The leaves release a strong, unpleasant odor if crushed.

In 2009, South Texas Natives and the Kika de la Garza Plant Materials Center will release Zapata Germplasm Rio Grande clammyweed [*Polanisia dodecandra* (L.) DC. ssp. *riograndensis*]. This release will consist of two collections, one from Dimmitt County and one from Zapata County. Zapata Germplasm is recommended for upland wildlife plantings and in range seeding mixes. Clammyweed seed is eaten by game birds such as bobwhite quail, scaled quail, mourning doves, white-wing doves, and Rio Grande wild turkeys, as well as many non-game species of birds and mammals. Rio Grande clammyweed is an important nectar plant for many species of butterflies and provides habitat to many other insects. Clammyweed has no grazing value for livestock or wildlife. Rio Grande clammyweed is an early successional plant. It is quick to establish on disturbed soils, grows quickly, and provides a favorable environment for other slow to germinate native species. In mixed species native plantings in south Texas, clammyweed is often the first planted species to emerge and flower. Rio Grande clammyweed readily re-seeds itself with moderate soil disturbance. Clammyweed is often found in dense stands of non-native grasses, and may be useful in efforts to diversify these stands for wildlife.

Info Sources: *Manual of the Vascular Plants of Texas* - Correll and Johnston; *Plants of the Texas Coastal Bend* - Lehman, O'Brien, & White; *Field Guide to the Broad-Leaved Herbaceous Plants of South Texas* – Everitt, Drawe, & Lonard; *Wildflowers of Texas* – Geyata Ajilvagi; and research performed at the PMC and by South Texas Natives.



Upcoming Events (361) 852-2100 www.ccbotanicalgardens.org

- **Kristie Kringle's Garden Shoppe Open House Dec. 6 and 7.** New and unique gifts, tasty refreshments, and SANTA, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The event is open to the public. Visitors Center admission is free!
- **Winter Lecture Series** for 'Winter Texans' & residents – Guest speakers will present unique perspectives on regional environmental, agricultural and horticultural topics from 10 to 11:30 a.m., Wednesdays, in January and February. Cost is general admission only (STBGNC members free). Topics and speakers to be announced. Call for reservations or further information.
- **Blacklock's Advanced Bird ID Series** - The Advanced Birding ID Series with acclaimed birder, naturalist and author Gene Blacklock of the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, will be offered beginning Monday, January 12. The series offers twelve class sessions, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Mondays; plus six field trips. Blacklock's Beginning Bird ID Series, or similar prior birding experience is required for the Advanced Series. Series tuition is \$150 for STBGNC members, \$175 non-members. Call for registration or more information.

NPSOT Calendar Fall 2007- Spring 2008

- **Dec. 4th** - NPSOT Monthly Meeting 7 p.m. – Dr. Alice Hempel - South Texas Ambrosia: The Endangered Weed
- **Jan.** – meeting in December and not January this year

Chapter Contacts

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State Web Site www.npsot.org